

Message Text

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USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 7992

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR,GW,UR,US,UK

SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESSURE ON WEST BERLIN

REF: A. BONN 7807; B. BONN 8034

1. SUMMARY. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CURRENT SOVIET PUSH ON WEST BERLIN, WHATEVER ITS CAUSES, IS CONSTRAINED BY SOVIET INTEREST IN MAINTAINING AN IMAGE OF REASONABLENESS IN WESTERN EUROPE. BECUASE OF THIS AND OTHER FACTORS THE ALLIES PROBABLY CAN REPLY TO SOVIET PRESSURE WITH FIRMNESS. THERE IS NO NEED, IN OUR VIEW, TO LET THE SPECTER OF QP CONSULTATIONS DETER US FROM TAKING ACTION WE DEEM NECESSARY TO COUNTER THE CURRENT INCREASE IN SOVIET PRESSURE ON THE CITY. ON TACTICS, AS A PART OF THE ALLIED ANSWERING EFFORT WE SUGGEST THAT THE THREE POWERS CEASE RESPONDING IN UNNECESSARY DETAIL TO SOVIET PROTESTS. BY CURTAILING THIS PRACTICE, THE ALLIES, IN OUR VIEW, WOULD REDUCE THE RISKS OF SOVIET WEDGE-DRIVING AND OF GIVING THE SOVIETS A GROWING VOICE
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IN DETERMINING WEST BERLIN'S FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE INCREASED SOVIET PRESSURE ON WEST BERLIN IS YET ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF LONG-TERM SOVIET EFFORTS TO RESHAPE WEST BERLIN INTO A "SPECIAL POLITICAL ENTITY" MORE AMENABLE TO SOVIET CONTROL. THE TIMING OF THIS LATEST STEP-UP IN PRESSURE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY SUCH TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AS THE NEED TO RESPOND TO THREE-POWER AND/OR FRG ACTIONS AND THE DESIRE TO ANTICIPATE QUADREPARTITE LANGUAGE IN A FINAL CSCE DOCUMENT. MORE BASICALLY, WE SUSPECT THAT INTENSIFICATION OF THE SOVIET EFFORT IS PROBABLY THE RESULT OF A JUDGEMENT THAT THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO WORK HARDER THAN ITS PREDECESSOR TO PUSH FRG TIES WITH WEST BERLIN. THE SOVIETS HAVE APPARENTLY DECIDED TO PREEMPT FUTURE FRG INITIATIVES BY PRESSING A RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE QA ON ALL FRONTS. THIS POLITICAL APPROACH TO THE QA, WITH A CONSEQUENT DISREGARD FOR SHADES OF LEGAL REASONING OFFERED TO SUPPORT AN OPPOSING INTERPRETATION, HAS BEEN CHARACTERISTIC OF THE SOVIET VIEW OF THE BERLIN AGREEMENT FROM THE BEGINNING, THOUGH IT HAS COME INTO THE OPEN WITH PARTICULAR CLARITY IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS.

3. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY FEEL THAT A RELATIVELY TOUGH ATTITUDE ON BERLIN COSTS THEM LITTLE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOVIET-FRG RELATIONS AT A TIME WHEN THEIR POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP TO BONN IS LESS IMPORTANT TO THEM THAN IT WAS IN THE BRANDT YEARS AND WHEN THEIR ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP IS LARGELY CONDUCTED THROUGH PRIVATE FRG CHANNELS. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE REFUSAL OF THE FRG TO EXTEND GOVERNMENT CREDITS FOR JOINT PROJECTS AND ITS STRONG POSITION ON THE PEACEFUL CHANGE ISSUE IN CSCE NO DOUBT REPRESENT TO THE SOVIETS A LESS ACCOMMODATING FRG ATTITUDE OVERALL THAN THEY WOULD HAVE HOPED FOR IN THE PALMIER DAYS OF BRANDT. MOREOVER, THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF THE END OF THE WAR MAKES THIS A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TIME FOR A MARKED IMPROVEMENT IN FRG-SOVIET RELATIONS.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, IN THE BERLIN CONTEXT, THE SOVIETS
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CONTINUE TO SEE ADVANTAGES FOR THEMSELVES IN A VIABLE AQ--INCLUDING NOT LEAST A PRESENCE IN WEST BERLIN. IN THE FRG CONTEXT, THEY ARE NOT ANXIOUS TO GO SO FAR AS TO INCITE WEST GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION TO A POINT WHICH COULD THREATEN A POLITICAL SWING TO THE RIGHT AND/OR A DECLINE ON THEIR BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS. AND MOST IMPORTANT, IN THE OVERALL EAST-WEST CONTEXT, THEY UNDERSTAND THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE QA IS REGARDED IN THE WEST AS A

TOUCHSTONE OF SOVIET SERIOUSNESS ABOUT DETENTE--ABOUT WHICH THE PARIS STATEMENT OF THE FOUR FOREIGN MINISTERS IS THE MOST RECENT REMINDER. THE RE-EMERGENCE OF BERLIN AS A FLASHPOINT OF TENSION COULD IMPERIL--IN INTANGIBLE, BUT NONETHELESS REAL, WAYS--THEIR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPE. WE DOUBT THAT THE CONCLUSION OF CSCE WOULD MAKE THIS FACTOR ANY LESS TRENCANT FOR THE SOVIETS, ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT ALLOW MOSCOW TO RAISE THE RHETORIC LEVEL ON BERLIN

5. THUS, WE BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL PUSH BERLIN ISSUES AS FAR AS THEY CAN, BUT THAT THEY WOULD NOT CARRY MATTERS TO CONFRONTATION IN THE FACE OF ALLIED FIRMNESS. OBVIOUSLY, U.S. AND FRG INTERESTS IN BERLIN ARE NOT IDENTICAL, AND THE U.S. SHOULD CONTINUE TO MONITOR CAREFULLY FRG EFFORTS TO PRESS THE OUTER LIMITS OF INTERPRETATION OF THE QA IN ITS DESIRE TO MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP TIES. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT IN OUR INTEREST TO ACCEPT THE SOVIET VIEW THAT TIES SHOULD REMAIN STATIC, AND WE SEE NO OVERRIDING NEED IN TERMS OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS TO ACCEPT IT. THEREFORE, THERE IS NO NEED TO IMPOSE AN OVERLY RESTRICTIVE REGIME ON BONN. SUCH AN OVER-REACTION BY THE WEST WOULD SERVE THE PURPOSES OF THE CURRENT (AND PAST) SOVIET CAMPAIGN. THE SOVIETS HAVE RECENTLY SHOWN THAT THEIR INTERPRETATIONS OF THE QA COULD, WITH TIME, BECOME EXTREMELY RESTRICTIVE. IF WE DO NOT ALLOW THE FRG TO APPLY REASONABLE COUNTER-ACTING PRESSURE, THE SOVIET VOICE IN WEST BERLIN AFFAIRS WILL BECOME MUCH STRONGER THAN IT IS NOW.

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LIMDIS

6. ON A TACTICAL LEVEL, BELOW THESE OVERALL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS, NOW MAY BE AN OPPORTUNE TIME TO SOCNSIDER SOME CHANGES IN THE WAY THE ALLIES REACT TO SOVIET PROTESTS ON WESTERN ACTIVITIES IN WEST BERLIN. WE HAVE FOLLOWED THE DISCUSSIONS IN REFTELS WITH INTEREST; - AND WE HAVE RESERVATIONS ON CONTINUING THE TRADITIONAL PRACTICE OF REPLYING IN DETAIL TO SOVIET PROTESTS ON BERLIN. THIS PRACTICE, AS WE SEE IT, PUTS THE ALLIES ON THE DEFENSIVE AND GIVES THE SOVIET PROTESTS A GREATER WEIGHT THAN THEY USUALLY DESERVE. MOREOVER, IT INVITES FURTHER SOVIET ATTACKS, MADE WITH THE FOREKNOWLEDGE THAT CONTINUED PROBING WILL TURN UP WEAK POINTS IN ALLIED ARGUMENTS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, EXACERBATE EXISTING DIFFERENCES, HOWEVER SLIGHT THEY MAY HAVE ORIGINALLY BEEN, AMONG THE FOUR WESTERN POWERS INVOLVED IN BERLIN AFFAIRS. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT, BY REACTING IN A DIFFERENTIATED MANNER TO THEIR PROTESTS THE ALLIES ARE INVOLUNTARILY GRANTING THE SOVIETS A GROWING VOICE IN DETERMINING WEST BERLIN'S FUTURE.

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7. WHILE NOT ADEPT IN THE ONTOLOGY OF BERLINERY, WE WOULD SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING GENERAL TACTICAL GUIDELINES:

(A) WE WOULD RECOMMEND THAT THE THREE POWERS CEASE REPLYING IN DETAIL TO SOVIET PROTESTS UNLESS GENUINELY NEW AND IMPORTANT ISSUES ARE RAISED. OUR SIDE SHOULD SIMPLY ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF PROTESTS, ADDING THAT THE SOVIET INTERPRETATION DOES NOT ACCORD WITH OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE FACTS AS HAS BEEN STATED ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS. IN SO DOING THE ALLIES WOULD NOT IN OUR VIEW COMPROMISE OR WEAKEN THEIR LEGAL POSITION; IN FACT, SUCH AN APPROACH MIGHT HELP TO PRESERVE THAT LEGAL POSITION FROM CONSTANT PETTY ASSAULTS BY THE SOVIETS. IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE--AND WE THINK POSSIBLE--TO DO THIS IN A WAY WHICH CONVEYED TO THE SOVIETS THAT THE U.S. HAS NO DESIRE TO LET THESE DIFFERENCES OVER BERLIN AFFECT THE OVERALL COURSE OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS.

(B) AT TIMES WHEN THE SOVIETS MOUNT A CONCERTED CAMPAIGN, WE MIGHT ALSO CONSIDER BEGINNING THE PRACTICE OF REPLYING TO SOVIET PROTESTS ON WEST BERLIN WITH

SIMILAR PROTESTS ON GDR AND SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN EAST BERLIN. WITH THE FOUR POWER POINT STATEMENT ON BERLIN IN PARIS ON MAY 28, THE ALLIES HAVE ALREADY LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUCH A NEW PROCEDURE. BY RESTRICTING THE USE OF SUCH PROTESTS TO OCCASIONS WHEN THE THREE POWERS RECEIVE SOVIET PROTESTS ON WEST BERLIN, THE SOVIETS WOULD BE GIVEN A FAIRLY CLEAR SIGNAL THAT THE WEST DOES NOT INTEND UNILATERALLY TO EXACERBATE THE SITUATION IN BERLIN, BUT IT WILL NO LONGER REFRAIN FROM POINTING OUT THEIR INFRACTIONS (AND THOSE OF THE GDR) ON THOSE OCCASIONS WHEN THEY CHOOSE TO TAKE ISSUE WITH WESTERN ACTIVITIES IN WEST BERLIN. THE IDEA WOULD BE, NOT TO ESCALATE THE POLEMICS, BUT TO STRESS TO MOSCOW THAT THEY WILL ACHIEVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE.

8. WE AGREE WITH THE BONN GROUP THAT QUADRIPARTITE CONSULTATIONS IN WHATEVER FORM ARE UNLIKELY TO BE OF BENEFIT. BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO ALLOW THE SPECTER OF SUCH CONSULTATIONS TO PREVENT THE ALLIES FROM TAKING WHATEVER ACTION THEY DEEM NECESSARY TO DISCOURAGE THE SOVIETS FROM INCREASING THEIR PRESSURE ON WEST BERLIN. IF SUCH CONSULTATIONS DO TAKE PLACE, THEY CAN
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AT LEAST BE USED TO REASSERT THE ALLIED POINT OF VIEW THAT EAST BERLIN IS STILL SUBJECT TO THE QA AND TO FORCE THE SOVIETS TO DEVOTE SOME EFFORT TO FENDING OFF THAT ATTACK. AND IN REPLY TO SOVIET ATTACKS ON PART II (B) OF THE QA, THE WESTERN SIDE WOULD SIMPLY HAVE TO STONEWALL. IT HAS A BASIC INTEREST IN WEST BERLIN, AND SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID OF DEFENDING THAT INTEREST. IN SHORT, WE THINK THAT AT LEAST FOR THE COMING YEAR THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO RISK A SHOWDOWN ON THIS ISSUE AND THAT WE SHOULD CONSEQUENTLY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS FACT TO CONSOLIDATE AND IMPROVE THE WESTERN POSITION ON BERLIN.
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